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A
LETTER

TO
HIS EXCELLENCY
THE
PRINCE OF TALLEYRAND PERIGORD,
&c. &c. &c.

ON THE SUBJECT OF
The Slave Trade.

BY
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ. M. P.

1814.

LETTER,

&c. &c.

Sandgate (Kent), Oct. 10th, 1814.

MONSEIGNEUR,

THE continued warfare which, to the regret of all good men, subsisted so long between France and Great Britain, was productive of this bad effect, among many others, that it prevented that mutual interchange of useful intelligence and suggestions, that intercourse of mind, if I may so term it, which is the happy privilege of our advanced state of social civilization. This consideration is painfully forced upon me by intelligence recently received from France. I should otherwise be greatly surprised as well as much concerned to hear, that the information concerning the nature and effects of the African Slave Trade, which, having been universally diffused throughout Great Britain, has produced one concurrent opinion and feeling on the subject in all classes of our community, has been very little circulated in France; and consequently, that the same erroneous notions of that traffic are still found among you, which were so generally prevalent in this country before such information was obtained.

The Slave Trade had existed for more than two centuries, and had greatly increased within the last; and of all the nations by which it was carried on, Great Britain had by far the largest share of it. At length, the public attention having been drawn to the subject, a Parliamentary Inquiry into the nature and consequences

of the Slave Trade took place ; and though, as might be expected, it was strenuously defended by classes of men who were personally interested in its continuance, and their prejudices and errors were great and obstinate, yet the true character of the trade having been brought to light, its fate was no longer doubtful. All our leading Statesmen, however widely and generally they differed on most other subjects, and whatever differences of opinion there were among them as to the *manner* of abolishing the Trade, all agreed on the national duty of its speedy and perpetual suppression.

It was not a case in which the voices of the many dictated to the judgments of the few ; but rather the reverse. The people waited with deference and patience for the issue of the Parliamentary Discussions : but the facts which were brought to light, and the conclusion upon them of the most distinguished Members in both Houses of Parliament, were promulgated throughout the country ; and the natural effect on the public mind was that general abhorrence of the traffic which so universally prevails in every part of this United Kingdom. The popular feeling, thus led and sanctioned by the judgment of the Legislature, greatly, no doubt, facilitated a reformation, which real difficulties, as well as groundless apprehensions, had conspired with very powerful particular interests, to retard. A great commercial body, with an immense capital, was directly interested in the support of the traffic for Slaves. The still more powerful body of West Indians combined in a most strenuous and long-protracted contest to preserve it ; and that dread of political reformation in the abstract which revolutionary mischiefs had produced, brought to the cause a very critical and powerful support, such as enabled them to delay the reformation which they could not avoid. But in a very few years, the cause of justice and mercy was completely victorious. The Slave Trade was prohibited ; was declared a felony, and visited by the severest punishment, short of death, that is inflicted by the laws of England. Such has been the progress of truth and right, such the consequences of the developement of the real nature and effects of the Slave Trade, that now, throughout these kingdoms, not an individual is to be found by whom that traffic is not condemned in terms of the strongest reprobation. There is no man whose feelings would not shrink from the shame, as well as his conscience recoil from the guilt, of being concerned in it ;—no man, who would not conceive that he should thereby hand down to his descendants profits polluted with blood, and a name branded with infamy.

It was the effect, perhaps, of too scrupulous a regard for private property, that the two Houses of Parliament instituted, and long prosecuted, that minute and protracted inquiry which, by reasoning

and considerate minds, might well have been deemed unnecessary to their own satisfaction. To purchase innocent human beings in one part of the world, to carry them by violence to another part, remote from every object of their human attachments, and there sell them into perpetual slavery, is a practice self-evidently repugnant to the first principles of moral obligation. No investigation could be necessary to prove, that such a trade as this ought, on moral grounds, to be renounced. It had been suggested indeed, in excuse for the Slave Trade, and it was unblushingly asserted as a fact, that slaves were bred for sale in Africa ;—also, that masters had great numbers of domestic slaves, whom they were entitled to sell at pleasure. But it was proved, at the very outset of the business, by abundant, and indeed by uncontradicted testimony, that, though there exists in Africa a sort of patriarchal vassalage, the master has no right to sell his native domestic slaves. Except in their obligation to serve a particular chief or master, they are in no respect distinguishable from freemen. Again : it might have been supposed that a slave market would be fed by prisoners of war, and by persons convicted of crimes and sentenced for transportation. But, though a small supply might be conceived to be afforded by convicts, and though the wars between neighbouring states might be supposed to furnish occasionally, even a considerable number of Slaves ; yet these sources could never supply that vast, and still less that regular and copious, tide of population which, for more than a century, had continually set from Africa into the western hemisphere. These undeniable truths having been once established it could scarcely be necessary to show by direct evidence, the natural, and indeed infallible effects of a traffic in man. It was an admitted fact, that a market for the sale of human beings, of both sexes, was established for nearly two thousand miles along the coast of Africa, and that the supply of this market was found, according to the ordinary principles of commerce, to accommodate itself to the demand. To these premises, it was added, by the express admission of the traders themselves, that, without questions asked as to the vendors' title, all the men, women, and children offered for sale were freely purchased by the European dealers. But man, when the subject of a large and regular commerce, cannot be furnished but by fraudulent or by forcible means. That such means could alone supply the insatiable, though fluctuating, demands of the African Slave Trade became still more clear, on the slightest consideration of the circumstances of that vast region from which the Slaves for the West Indies are brought. The coast of Africa is divided into various communities of different sizes ; some, governed by kings more or less absolute ; others, and those the greater number, by

elders. Their state of civilization is, in general, very imperfect ; their notions of morality extremely rude ; and the powers of their governments ill defined. It is natural, therefore, to imagine, that if the kings or chieftains should be tempted by the solicitations of appetite to acts of injustice or oppression, they would not be slow to the commission of them.—To such ill cemented societies as these, imagine then the vessels of the Slave Traders resorting ; and offering, in exchange for men, women, and children, all the articles by which the industry and ingenuity of highly polished nations can supply the wants and gratify the appetites, and stimulate the passions of uncivilized men ; more especially spirits, to excite to acts of rapine, and fire-arms and gunpowder to effect them.

Such are the causes ; what must be the effects ? Surely every form of wrong and robbery, of fraud and violence. The chieftain would be incited to become the assailant and ravager of the territory of his petty neighbour. When too weak to venture on a foreign inroad, he would but too naturally be tempted to become the despoiler of those very subjects of whom he was naturally the guardian and protector. But it would not be on the chieftains only, that these effects would be produced ;—all men have the appetites, all the weaknesses, all the passions of their nature. We might but too surely anticipate the result : universal insecurity and distrust. Every man dreading to find an enemy in every other ; the stronger preying on the weaker ; the whole community would be rendered one wide scene of anarchy, rapacity, and terror.

These speculations, founded on the principles of human nature, and verified by the experience of all ages, were confirmed but too fully, in every particular, by authentic relations of specific facts. It was proved by most respectable, and indeed unquestionable testimony, and was admitted by the opponents of the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade, no less than by its warmest supporters, that this detestable traffic was indebted for its supplies to wars, in many instances excited by Europeans ; in many, commenced by the natives, for the purpose of procuring Slaves. These wars, of course, produced retaliation. A lasting feud was generated ; and a spirit of hostility and revenge, between chieftain and chieftain, transmitted from generation to generation. Again : Slaves were proved to be obtained by depredations, perpetrated by the kings of the country on their own subjects, when too weak or too timid to attack a neighbour ; sometimes, by seizing unsuspecting individuals ; sometimes, by breaking up and setting fire to villages in the night, and catching the inhabitants as they fled naked from the flames.

Once more :—The Slave Trade was shown to be supplied by predatory acts of all sorts and sizes ; from that of the larger or

smaller armed party, which seizes some unguarded village or unprotected family, to the individual who lurks in the bushes, or by the watering places, and seizes some female, or some child, who may accidentally be passing. The Slave Trade obtained a considerable number from *panyaring*, as it is termed, (for the practice is so frequent, as to have produced a specific name), or kidnapping of Negroes, of every tribe, of all ranks and occupations, of both sexes and all ages, most commonly by the black traders, occasionally by British captains and seamen. When a slave ship is on the coast, an immediate premium is held out for the perpetration of every species of fraud and rapine. It is not only between state and state, between village and village, that the seeds of insecurity and terror are copiously sown: in the delirium of intoxication, in a sudden access of anger or jealousy, a husband or a master is tempted to sell his wife or his domestics, whom afterwards he in vain wishes to recover.

Finally. The Slave Trade was proved to owe a large supply to the perversion of penal justice, by the infliction of slavery as the punishment of almost every real crime, however trifling; more frequently as the punishment of pretended crimes, especially of witchcraft, imputed for the very purpose of enslaving the party accused, sometimes his whole family with him.

The miserable condition into which Africa is actually sunk by the prevalence of such a system of atrocious enormities, was equally established. The almost total annihilation of private security, of mutual confidence, of domestic comfort;—the temptations held out to the darkest passions of the human heart; to malevolence and guile, to cruelty, rancour, and revenge; these, and all the other dreadful effects which the Slave Trade had been charged with producing in that devoted land, were allowed not merely to have been delineated with the sober colouring of truth, but to have been ascribed to their proper and never-failing source, when stated to be the inevitable consequences of that horrid traffic. Again—It was established but too clearly, and was abundantly confirmed by the authentic acknowledgment of writers, themselves engaged in the Slave Trade, that by the progressive operation of slow but too sure causes, the various civil and religious institutions of Africa had been gradually warped and moulded into the means of furnishing victims to the Slave Market. The native superstitions, which had often faded away before the feeble light of Mohammedanism, instead of being discouraged, had been carefully fostered by the Christian visitors, and rendered an abundant source of supply. The administration of justice had received the same poisonous taint. The older writers assure us, that the criminal law of Africa used to be very mild; but by degrees every

crime, however trivial, has become punishable by being sold for a slave, with all its dreadful consequences : and the judge who tries the criminal has commonly a share of the price for which he is sold. The creditor, for lack of payment, may sell his debtor for a slave ; or, if he cannot seize the person of his immediate debtor, he may take one of his relations, or any of the same town, or even of the same nation, and sell him for a slave. Indeed, it is very rarely that the debtor himself is molested ; it is his neighbours or townsmen who are the sufferers. Hence persons become debtors more freely, because, while they gratify their appetites by obtaining the European goods they want, they are not likely to pay for this indulgence in their own persons. The captains of slave ships are in their turn less backward in advancing goods on credit to the black factors, and they again to other native dealers, knowing that from some quarter or another the slaves will surely be supplied.

Again :—It has become the custom for captains of slave ships, in exchange for the goods which they advance on credit, to receive the children or other near relatives of the black factor as pledges, or, as they are termed in Africa, *pawns* ; whom the slave captains are to return, when the stipulated number of slaves has been delivered. Furnished with the goods, he sets about fulfilling his contract. But the supply from the interior fails him—or he is in some other way disappointed in the quarter to which he had looked for obtaining his complement of slaves. Meanwhile the slave captain becomes urgent, the ship is about to sail, and, by some mode or other, he must make up his requisite number, or his own nearest relatives will be carried off into slavery. Thus the domestic and social affections, and even parental instinct itself, through the malignant influence of the Slave Trade, are rendered incentives to acts of fraud or rapine : and all that machinery of the social state to which our happier communities are chiefly indebted for the security and comfort of life, and which, though but rude and unshapely in these uncivilized countries, might yet have tended, according to its imperfect measure, to their peace and conservation, is perverted into so many engines of oppression and cruelty. Such are the methods by which from 80 to 100,000 of our fellow-creatures, a race of people too, declared by Park, Golberry, Winterbottom, and other respectable authorities, to be remarkable for their attachment to their native soil, are annually torn from their country, their homes, their friends, and from whatever is most dear to them. All the ties of nature, and habit, and feeling, are burst asunder ; and these victims of our injustice are carried to a distant land, to wear away the whole remainder of their lives in a state of hopeless slavery and degradation, with

the same melancholy prospect for their descendants after them forever. Thus, as was acknowledged in the Assembly of Jamaica itself by the historian of the West Indies, Mr. Edwards, though one of our chief opponents: "Thus, the greatest part of that vast continent is rendered a field of warfare and desolation; a wilderness, in which the inhabitants are wolves towards each other; a scene of oppression, fraud, treachery, and blood." Finally, thus the Slave Trade has become entitled to that pre-eminence in evil, which the sober judgment of a great English Statesman assigned to it, in those memorable words which he uttered in the British Parliament, "that the Slave Trade was the greatest practical evil that ever had been suffered to afflict the human race."

Such then are the horrors, such the cruelties, such the guilt and shame of the African Slave Trade. But more is yet behind. Nay, strange as it may appear, the grand evil of all still remains to be specified. For it were some mitigation of these evils, intense as they are in degree, and extended in their prevalence, if we might look forward, though at a distant day, to their final termination; if we might hope that the genial influence of civilization, and still more that the blessed light of Christianity, might shine at length on those benighted regions, and law and order, entering in their train, might hereafter succeed to insecurity and rapine. But that accursed plague of the human race, the Slave Trade, is so prolific of evil as, from generation to generation, to provide for its own continuance. What progress can be made by civilization, but under the sheltering protection of laws, when there is some tolerable security for person and property? But Africa is one vast scene of insecurity, anarchy, and terror. That dreadful system of wrong and robbery, by so misapplied a courtesy of speech termed the *Trade* in Slaves, keeps the vast area, throughout which it prevails, in a state of constant disquiet and alarm. More especially on that side where alone the uncivilized sons of Africa come into contact with inhabitants of more polished regions, the slave traders maintain, as it were, a high and impenetrable barrier against the entrance into the interior of all social improvement, of any rays of the religious and moral light of our happier quarter of the globe; thus locking up the whole of that vast continent in its actual state of darkness and degradation. Hence arises a strange and, till now, unprecedented phenomenon. In reviewing the moral history of man, and contemplating his progress from ignorance and barbarism to a state of social refinement, it has been perhaps invariably found that the sea coasts and the banks of navigable rivers, those districts which from their situation had most intercourse with more polished nations, have been the earliest civilized. In them civil order and social improvement, agriculture, industry, and, at length, the arts

and sciences have first flourished, and they have by degrees extended themselves into more inland regions. But the very reverse is the case in Africa. There the countries on the coast which have had a long and intimate intercourse with the most polished European nations, are in a state of utter ignorance and barbarism—using, indeed, some of our manufactures, but having derived from us the knowledge only of our crimes. On the contrary, the interior countries, where not the face of a white man was ever seen, are far more advanced in the order and security, the comforts and improvements, of social life.

And now you see the bitter cup of Africa filled to the very brim. Yet, bitter as it is, it is far exceeded in bitterness by the draught prepared for the miserable wretches whom the slave ships carry away from her much-injured coasts; by the miseries of the Middle Passage, as it is termed. So manifold, indeed, were these miseries, so humiliating, so heart-rending, that, when the interior of these floating prisons was first opened to the view, they appeared almost to surpass the possibility of human endurance. The habit of viewing and treating these wretched beings as articles of merchandize had so blinded the judgment, and hardened the hearts of the slave dealers, as to produce a savage brutality of treatment, that was destructive even of the lives of its wretched victims, in spite of all those considerations of self-interest which might have been deemed sufficient to obtain for the Slaves all those outward comforts at least, which might be supposed conducive to the preservation of their bodily health. Human ingenuity had almost been exhausted in contriving expedients for crowding the greatest possible number of human bodies into a given space. Imagine to yourself a vessel completely filled with these miserable wretches, never before on ship-board; the men, commonly the greater part of the cargo, linked to each other (for the safety of the vessel) two and two, sometimes men of different countries and languages, by fetters, and, when brought on deck, additionally secured with chains! Conceive the flooring of the decks and hold, and of intervening stages on platforms also, for by far the greater part of the voyage, completely covered with human bodies, so closely as to touch each other, and as to be unable of themselves to change their position; often their limbs excoriated by lying on the boards, or wounded by the fetters! Conceive, what often happens, the flux, the small-pox, or some other epidemic breaking out among them! I will not proceed; I will only state that such scenes take place as are too nauseously horrible for description, though not too bad for human avidity for gain to subject fellow-creatures to undergo. The surgeons who have witnessed these dreadful scenes assure us, that the heat and

stench are almost insupportable ; and quite so when the badness of the weather renders it necessary for the Slaves to be closely confined below ; and it is no uncommon event for Slaves to expire by suffocation. But when brought on deck, there is but a poor mitigation of their sufferings. Even the very mercies of the Slave Trade are cruel. Sea-sickness and mental uneasiness must often make them loath their food, and feel averse to exercise. But food and motion are necessary to present the animal in good condition at the place of sale. Eating, therefore, and dancing, as it is called, in their fetters, must be exacted by stripes ; and these vile indignities are not seldom practised on men of high spirits, of quick feelings, sometimes even of literary acquirements. Mr. Park states, that out of the 130 Slaves which were the cargo—it is humiliating to our nature to use the expression—of the slave ship in which he sailed from the river Gambia to the West Indies, twenty-five could write the Arabic language. If we could doubt the intensity of their sufferings, we have a gage by which to measure it, in that striking fact, that in the very equipment of an African ship, there is a standing precaution against acts of suicide ; a precaution, however, that is often unavailing. And various instances were related of Slaves who had destroyed themselves, by jumping overboard ; glorying, in the very moment of their sinking, from the idea of their escaping thereby out of the power of their persecutors ; or by a determined abstinence from food, in spite of all the means, lenient or forcible, that could be used to induce or force the poor creature to take it. Common distress excites compassion ; horror and astonishment are produced by miseries like these. Who that witnessed the scene will ever forget the generous burst of indignation which was called forth by the first exhibition of the abominations of a slave ship to the eyes of a British Parliament ? The inquiry into the nature of the trade was then commencing, and a law was immediately passed, prescribing, so long as the trade should continue, the greatest allowable proportion of Slaves to the tonnage, and endeavouring, by other regulations, to secure for the wretched beings some mitigation of their sufferings, by insuring them a sufficiency of food and water and medical attendance. But in the large amount of the sufferings of the Slaves on ship-board, trivial indeed must be the diminution which all such regulations as these can possibly effect. I the rather notice this topic, because the Court of Brazil has lately issued an edict, prescribing similar, though far less effectual, regulations ; but with this most important distinction, that they are not considered merely as temporary regulations like those of the British Parliament, which were to be in force only while the inquiry was going forward, but as permanent expedients by which the Slave

Trade, as the framers of the edict seem to imagine, may be rendered consistent with the most refined humanity. Nay, the framers of this Portuguese edict, in adopting these wretched palliatives, appear to pride themselves on their Christian beneficence. Even the bodily sufferings of the Slaves can be but little alleviated; but it is scarcely too much to assert that the anguish of the mind may be even increased from the attention being less called forth by the urgency of bodily sufferings. Is it a refinement? The feelings of my heart assure me that it is not, when I declare, that in providing a sufficiency of space, and food, and water, for human beings, whom you are tearing from all they hold dear in their native land, and are bearing into a state of interminable slavery, and telling them to be comfortable and grateful, is less tolerable than the severest pains that human avarice or even malice could inflict. Such, at least, will be the feeling of every generous spirit; and never were there more generous spirits than have been found to animate the bosoms of many of these despised Negroes. Your enmity they can understand, your cruelty they can endure, sometimes even despise; but insult them not by your humanity, and allow not yourself, in the practice of these detestable and wicked barbarities, to indulge in the complacencies of humanity and virtue. Do your very best to reconcile the discordancy—Be as liberal as you will with your bodily accommodations—the anguish of husbands torn from their wives, of wives from their husbands, and of parents from their children, must still continue: the pangs arising from the consideration, that they are separated for ever from their country, their relatives, their friends, and connections, still remain the same—They have the same painful recollection of the past, the same dreadful forebodings of the future; they are still among strangers, whose appearance, language, manners, are new to them, and every surrounding object is such as naturally to inspire terror. In short, till we can legislate for the mind; till we can regulate, by statute, the affections of the heart, or rather till we can extinguish the feelings of our nature; till, in order to qualify these wretched beings for being treated like brutes, we can completely unman and brutalize them, the memorable declaration made in a British Parliament will still continue true, that no where upon earth can so much misery be found condensed into so small a space as in the hold of a slave ship.

But how, it may well be asked, if the nature and effects of the Slave Trade were proved to be such as have been here stated; how was it possible for the British Parliament to forbear from immediately abolishing it? How was it that, after so long an inquiry, several years elapsed before the trade was actually prohibited?

Great were the obstacles and various the considerations and

arguments which, for some years, retarded the actual execution of that sentence of condemnation, which, however, from the very first, was decisively pronounced by all the respectable part even of those who voted against the immediate abolition. Neither can it be denied, that the grand obstacle in the way of the abolitionists, from which the Slave Trade derived a support far more effectual than that which any arguments could have supplied, was, the vast amount of national wealth which, it was alleged, would be endangered, or rather lost, by its discontinuance. The Slave Trade itself had existed so long, and attained to such a magnitude, and the far more powerful West Indian interests which were most mistakenly supposed to be dependent on it, had grown to such a size, and had struck their roots so deeply and so widely, as by degrees to have extended and multiplied their holdings throughout a great part of the community: and we know but too well, that mankind are slow to admit any truths which are supposed to involve consequences injurious to their interests. The hostility of the West Indians was greatly aggravated by an attempt which had been made, with considerable success, to confound the abolition of the Trade in Slaves with the Emancipation of those already in the colonies; though the abolitionists took all opportunities of proclaiming, that it was the Slave Trade, not Slavery, against which they were directing their efforts.

I have remarked, that the same misapprehension pervades the recent publication of the Chamber of Commerce at Nantes; and I have been assured, that one of the ablest of your public men, whose recent loss you are now deploring, had also been misled into adopting it.

But let me again remind you, in justice alike to the Parliament and People of Great Britain, that the dreadful nature and effects of the Slave Trade were almost utterly unknown, till the result of the parliamentary inquiry had withdrawn the veil which had hitherto concealed them. Even then, it was only by degrees that the rays of truth were able to dissipate those clouds of falsehood and prejudice by which commercial avidity endeavoured to shroud in darkness the abominations which it was conscious were too shocking to endure the light. One only of these falsehoods shall be specified as a sample of the whole. The Slave Trade was justified on the ground that the Negroes were so depraved and stupid, as to be fit only to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the rest of our species. In refutation of so vile a falsehood, let me refer to the evidence delivered before the British Parliament, and also to the testimony of various travellers, even to that of Park and Golberry themselves, though seduced by self-interest into favoring the cause of the Slave Traders. The Slave Trade

was also justified on the ground that Africans were so completely wretched at home, that it was mercy to transport them, though by means somewhat harsh, to the enjoyment of West Indian servitude. Thus was insult added to injury, in the treatment of these unhappy people. If they are wretched, it is we Europeans that have made them so. I dare not deny that we have called forth and cherished among the Negroes all the worst passions of our nature, and vice will ever be productive of misery; but if we except the Moors, who are not subjects of the Slave Trade, their moral dispositions are stated by those very travellers who were themselves engaged in the Slave Trade, or who, like the two writers whom I lately mentioned, have countenanced, or at least palliated it, to be eminently amiable and hospitable. Who can read the account of the benevolence and gentleness of the Africans, of their parental and filial tenderness, of their social and domestic affection, of their extraordinary attachment to their country and homes, of the conjugal fidelity, combined with great cheerfulness and frankness, of the women, of their industry and perseverance, where they have any adequate motive to prompt them to work, of their courage, and, in some cases, of their magnanimity, two instances of which are given, scarcely inferior to any thing recorded in Greek or Roman story, who can read these accounts, without acknowledging, that so far is it from being true, that the ferocity and savageness of the African character furnish some apology for the Slave Trade, that the guilt of carrying on that traffic is greatly aggravated by the mild and amiable qualities of its unhappy victims; who can forbear feeling the liveliest emotions of concern and shame, that the superior energies of our more highly favored quarter of the globe, have not been exerted in endeavouring to improve and civilize, rather than in oppressing and, if I may use the term, barbarizing these most amiable beings?

But it is due to all the more respectable part of the opponents of immediate abolition, to declare, that such wretched pleas as those which I have been now exposing, found from them no support or countenance. The arguments which operated against us most powerfully with them, were two; first, that the abolition of the Slave Trade, by Great Britain alone, while other nations should carry it on, and carry it on probably to a greater extent after Great Britain should have relinquished it, would be productive of no real benefit to Africa. And secondly, that though Great Britain should have prohibited the Trade in Slaves, and the importation of them into her West Indian settlements, yet, that while they should continue to be imported into the West Indian colonies of other European nations, which are intermixed with her own, it would be impossible to prevent their being smuggled into the British settle-

ments. Therefore, that though Great Britain might prohibit the carrying on of the Slave Trade by her own subjects, she would by no means thereby suppress, perhaps not even diminish, the total sum of that nefarious traffic. Whatever force there might be in these arguments, it is obvious that not only they cannot be urged against a proposition for the universal abolition of the Slave Trade by all the European nations, but that they even operate powerfully in the opposite direction.

But there were also various allegations and predictions which, though loudly and confidently proclaimed by the warmer adversaries of the measure, more especially by the representatives and connections of those who were directly or indirectly interested in the commerce in Slaves, would now be unworthy of your notice, as having been utterly exploded, were it not probable that they may again be urged on your side of the water. Indeed I have lately read, with regret, similar false statements in some of your public prints.

In direct defiance of truth, it was unblushingly asserted that the greater part of the African population consisted of slaves whom, by the custom of Africa, their masters had a right to sell at pleasure; and that these slaves, being treated with great barbarity, were happy to exchange a black master for a white one. Both these assertions are utterly false. It was undeniably established, that though, as has already been stated, a species of patriarchal vassalage does prevail in Africa, yet that masters have no right to sell their slaves, except for crimes to which the punishment of transportation is attached by the laws of Africa, in many parts after a sort of trial by jury; and so well are they treated by their masters, that the accounts which we have received of the manner in which the masters and slaves work, and eat, and live together, constitutes a beautiful picture of patriarchal simplicity and comfort.

Again, it was asserted, that those prisoners of war, convicts, and other classes of the population of Africa which it had long been customary to sell to the Europeans, would be massacred by their own countrymen, when the former mode of disposing of them should no longer exist. In refutation of this assertion, it appeared that frequently, more especially on the breaking out of war between the great European Nations, the Slave Trade had been suddenly stopped, but that no such consequences had ensued. On the contrary, the factors employed in cultivation, the Slaves they already possessed; while, as was repeatedly stated by the natives, the cessation of the Slave Trade put an immediate stop to the wars and depredations which had been before so prevalent. It appeared, in short, that the supply for the Slave Market was manufactured, if I may so express it, only for the demand, and that

when this demand ceased, the manufacture also was discontinued. Another strange and utterly groundless assertion was, that the Slaves already in our West Indian Colonies, mistaking the abolition of the African Slave Trade for their own emancipation, a confusion, I have already stated, produced only by our opponents themselves, would break out into insurrection, and that our West Indian Islands would consequently become one wide scene of anarchy and desolation.

To these gloomy apprehensions were super-added confident predictions of the utter ruin of our vast transatlantic possessions, as well as of a vast body of our merchants and manufacturers in the mother country. Our opponents predicted the decay of our marine, the diminution of our revenue, if not the utter ruin of our finances. In short, in times such as those in which we live, when great and expensive naval and military establishments have become necessary to the national security, they foretold the gradual decline and ultimate ruin of Great Britain. Surely after seven years' experience, we may appeal to all Europe, if these alarming predictions have not been falsified by the event. Notwithstanding the great extent of our traffic in Slaves, of which we then possessed the monopoly, our Rulers themselves, Lord Grenville in the House of Lords, and Lord Howick, now Earl Grey, in the House of Commons, (I delight in recording my country's, and may I not add my own, obligation to them,) confidently assuming for their guides the laws of justice, and the principles of humanity, proposed, and the Legislature decreed the immediate abolition of that disgraceful traffic. And what has been the result? Neither in our commerce, our manufactures, our marine, our revenue, have we suffered any apparent injury. Yet I will frankly own to you, Prince, that when these melancholy denunciations which I lately mentioned were first uttered, when the fatal consequences of the Abolition were first stated to me, I could not hear them without serious alarm. But even then, I could not but be slow to admit the truth and probability of these melancholy forebodings. Had, then, the great Author and Disposer of all things deviated so strangely in this instance, from the general principles of his moral administration, as to have identified the prosperity of a mighty empire with the continuance of a system of wickedness and cruelty, hitherto without a parallel in the annals of the world? The very supposition was little less than blasphemy against the moral character of the Almighty. This consideration revived my hopes, and I advanced towards my object with renewed alacrity; yet I could not proceed altogether without anxiety, after having been warned so solemnly that I was advancing in paths which must end in the ruin of my country. It was not long, however, before authentic information

and sound reasoning altogether dispelled my fears; and I was enabled to prove, to the entire satisfaction of all our greatest statesmen, that these gloomy apprehensions were altogether vain, the offspring only of prejudice and error.

You will not be surprised that the attention of an Englishman was first turned, with peculiar sensibility, to that part of the reasoning of our opponents, in which they earnestly contended that the Slave Trade was a necessary source for the supply of seamen to the navy. Happily the falsehood of this assertion was soon undeniably proved. The zealous and humane industry of Mr. Clarkson, to whom our cause owes the highest obligations, discovered that which the muster rolls of slave ships furnished by our opponents themselves afterwards ascertained beyond dispute, that owing in part to the insalubrity of the African climate, but far more to peculiar circumstances arising out of that traffic itself, to which happily a trade in the natural productions of Africa is not liable, the Slave Trade deserved to be termed the grave rather than the nursery of our seamen. It would be tedious to enter here into a minute detail; but it is also unnecessary, because almost all our great naval men, without exception, though several of them were favorable to what they erroneously deemed the cause of the West Indian Islands, from having been treated, when stationed in their harbours, with commendable hospitality; in particular, Lord Rodney, a name of high renown in the naval history of Great Britain, frankly acknowledged that the Slave Trade was not a nursery for seamen. In short, it may be truly affirmed, that there never was a greater error than that of praising the Slave Trade as beneficial to the naval force of Great Britain.

But the grand alarm of all was for our West Indian Colonies. In them, confessedly, was invested a large mass of the national capital. The real value of our annual exports to them were above ten millions sterling; that of our imports from them seventeen millions sterling: nor could it be denied that the West Indian Trade, probably in proportion to the number of seamen employed in it, contributed to the maintenance of our marine. All the apprehensions for the West Indies manifestly hinged on one question, whether the number of the Negro Slaves, already in the islands, could be kept up by natural generation only. The West Indians loudly proclaimed that, from some invincible obstacles, the slave population of our West Indian Islands could not be maintained, much less increased, without continual importations from Africa. It seemed strange, indeed, that, in contradiction alike of the great law of nature, and contrary to the universal experience of all other countries, the population of several islands, remarkable for their fertility, and peopled by a race of men to whom the climate was

congenial, should necessarily decline. It appeared much more strange, when on inquiry it had been found that the Negroes were represented by the best writers as perhaps the most prolific people on the globe. The climate of the West Indies was similar to that of Africa, only more salubrious. Why, then, should the same race of beings gradually diminish in the West Indian Colonies, which on the opposite Continent had so increased and multiplied as for two centuries to bear the continual drain of their population to the opposite side of the Atlantic? On examining whether the Negro race had kept up its numbers in other foreign countries, it was found that it had increased, and sometimes rapidly, even where the influence of the climate might be justly supposed to have been highly unfavorable.

The climate of the United States of America, for instance, is far from being well suited to the Negro constitution, which, we are assured, is so little patient of cold, as even in the West Indies to suffer from it. The cold in America is often very severe in the winter, even in the Southern States; and the peculiar nature of the employment of great numbers of the Slaves, working in the Rice Plantations, must operate very unfavorably on their health; yet the Negro Slaves are universally acknowledged to have so rapidly increased in that country, that, according to the last census of the American population, without taking into the account any importations, the Negroes had increased so much in the ten years last preceding, that, continuing to advance at the same rate, their numbers would be doubled in about twenty-four years.

Again; in Bencoolen, which has been accounted one of the most unhealthy climates on earth, the Negro Slaves had increased.

But, lest the decrease in our islands should be supposed to arise out of some peculiarity of the West Indian climate, undoubted instances of Negro increase can be adduced, even in the West Indies themselves. The crew of a slave ship had been wrecked on the unsettled island of St. Vincent's, about the beginning of the 18th century: they had every difficulty to contend with, were wholly unprovided with necessaries, and were obliged to maintain a constant war with the native Charaibs: yet they had soon multiplied exceedingly. Even in the island of Jamaica itself, the Maroons, the descendants of the Negro Slaves, who, when the island was originally captured, made their escape into the mountains, and ever afterwards lived the life of savages; the Maroons, who were acknowledged by the West Indians themselves to be under peculiar circumstances, so unfavorable to the maintenance of their numbers, that their decrease would furnish no fair argument for the general impossibility of keeping up the stock, were found, by ac-

tual enumeration, to have nearly doubled their numbers in the period between 1749 and 1782.

In the same island of Jamaica, the Free Blacks and the Mulattoes were stated by the historian of Jamaica, Mr. Long, an author of high credit, to have increased. The domestic Slaves were said also, by Mr. Long, to increase rapidly. Several particular instances were adduced, of gangs of Slaves having been kept up, and even having increased without importation; and one of the most eminent of the medical men in Jamaica, who had under his care no less than 4,000 Negroes, stated that there was a very considerable increase of Negroes on the properties of that island, particularly in the parish in which he resided, one of the largest in Jamaica. All these instances certainly afforded a strong presumptive proof that the stock of Slaves in the islands might with proper treatment be kept up, and might even increase, without continual importations.

But the conclusion resulting from so much, and such diversified experience, was established also by positive and decisive reasoning. It was proved, First, That the abuses and the obstructions to the natural increase, which too generally prevail, were sufficient to account for a rapidly decreasing population, and even to lead us to expect it.

Secondly, That the decrease, which really had been considerable a century ago, had been gradually diminishing; till at length there was good reason to believe it had entirely ceased, and that the population fully maintained itself.

Thirdly, That, therefore, if the great and numerous abuses which now prevail, should be materially mitigated, and the means of correcting them were clearly pointed out, we might confidently anticipate in future a great and even a rapid increase. Such was the argument of Mr. Pitt on that memorable night, when the subject was discussed in the British House of Commons. His eloquence, never more splendid, because never more from the heart, than when it was exerted in the cause of Africa, shone on that night with more than ordinary lustre. His superior powers of reasoning were never more powerfully displayed. His positions were clearly deduced from the very documents and accounts which had been supplied by the islands themselves; and he completely refuted the grand position of the West Indians, that the stock of Slaves actually in our islands could not be maintained without continual importations, and established the opposite position with a force of reasoning little short of demonstration. Such was the generous acknowledgment of his great political rival, Mr. Fox, who, though on almost every other subject his strenuous adversary, never failed to co-operate with him on this with the most zealous

cordiality.¹ But it is not necessary to my present purpose to enumerate the abuses of our own West Indian system. I will only remark, that though most of the vices of the system were greatly aggravated by the absentee-ship so generally prevalent in the British West Indian islands, and by the embarrassed state of the affairs of by far the greater part of the planters; yet, perhaps, the abuses might all be truly said to bottom, in its having been the general policy to make great immediate profits rather than the permanent value of the estate, the leading object; and consequently to work down and look to the Slave Market, and not to the natural increase, for a fresh supply of laborers. I say, this was the *general* policy. There were many individual exceptions; exceptions so much the more honorable, as the opposite practice was so generally prevalent, and was supposed to be the more profitable course. It is my more agreeable province to remark, that your planters, except perhaps in St. Domingo, were more generally residents; and that your West Indian islands, from their larger size, as well as from other circumstances, are much more favorably circumstanced than ours were, for a home-born increase. If, therefore, even in the British West Indian islands, there was no real need of these continual recruits from Africa for maintaining and gradually, according to the order of nature, increasing the stock of laborers, much more confidently may the same position be affirmed in the case of your West Indian settlements. And surely, Sir, to your penetrating and comprehensive mind, it must be needless for me to point out the highly beneficial consequences which would result from putting an end to the strange unnatural system on which the West Indian colonies of all nations have hitherto proceeded, and from restoring them to a more sound and healthful regimen. This is not the time or place for entering at large into the discussion of this important subject. Suffice it to state, that it was soon deeply impressed on those who contemplated our West Indian possessions considerably, and with a statesman's eye, that there was no small reason to tremble for the safety of the fabric which we had gradually been rearing in the Western Hemisphere. True, they beheld a spacious and a lofty structure, but its foundations were manifestly artificial and unnatural, and therefore unsound and precarious. They saw a vast agricultural and manufacturing system carried on by a factitious population, torn by force from the opposite continent. And what a popula-

¹ Let me pay a willing tribute to the memory of this great man, who died during our last struggle, and therefore did not witness the final issue of that warfare in which he was always so powerful a combatant; that no man felt the wrongs of Africa more deeply, and that, even in his last illness, his own sufferings did not render him forgetful of them.

tion ! Was it not in Athens, Sir, where the Slaves were better treated than in any other of the Grecian states, that a proposal being made for them to wear a particular dress, that by a palpable mark they might at once be distinguished from freemen, the plan was at once rejected, on the suggestion, that it would infallibly bring on the ruin of the state, by making to the slaves, who greatly outnumbered the free citizens, the dangerous discovery of their superior force. In the West Indian colonies of the different European states, the hand of Nature herself has made that dangerous discovery.

When, therefore, we consider, that the Blacks in your West Indian colonies outnumber the Whites, in a proportion not far short of ten to one, and when we take into account, that the newly imported Negroes, from the common feelings of our nature, are the most discontented and refractory, and inclined to rise in insurrections, so that Mr. Long, one of the most experienced of the West Indian writers, ascribed the great Jamaica insurrection, in 1765-6, to the newly imported Negroes, and exclaimed, that 27,000 fresh Slaves, imported in two years and a half, were alone sufficient to account for mutinies and insurrections ; surely it may be truly affirmed, that, were all considerations of justice or humanity out of the question, common prudence alone would protest, with a loud voice, against the rashness of still farther increasing the disproportion between the Blacks and Whites in your old colonies, by continually renewed importations of African Slaves. But, *above all*, is not this important truth powerfully enforced on you by the dreadful incidents of St. Domingo ? Are you ignorant, that, whatever may have been the immediate causes which produced that awful explosion, whatever may have been the spark that kindled the flame, *it was the unprecedented importations of Slaves into that settlement, for the fifteen years immediately preceding the revolutionary year 1790, to the average amount, in the last ten years, of twenty-six thousand per annum*, which heaped up that mass of combustibles, which soon burned with such resistless fury ? Surely the handwriting on the wall would be an insufficient warning to those, who can slight the instructive lesson which the events in that island have read, on the fatal consequences to which those communities must be ever liable, that are compounded of such discordant elements, in defiance of the fundamental principles by which the Great Author of all things has provided for the happiness and safety of the social state ; in contempt of justice and humanity, of the laws of nature and of God. In our astonishment at the folly of this misconduct, we are almost lost to the perception of its guilt. To be carrying in fresh fuel, at the very moment when every prudent man would be preparing against

the impending conflagration! Scarcely less would be the madness of any one, who should expend his substance in building a costly edifice on the scarcely covered embers of some volcano, which should still be smoking, after overwhelming all the adjacent region with its liquid fire. Yet even this infatuation becomes sobriety and reason, when compared with the still more monstrous conception of resettling and cultivating St. Domingo, as formerly, with successive importations of African Slaves! yet, in the recent memorial of the Chamber of Commerce of Nantes, not only is this design announced in explicit terms, but it seems to be regarded as an event of no extraordinary difficulty or danger. Even in this country, the real state of St. Domingo has been known only to very few persons, who have made it their business to inquire into it. The merchants of Nantes must be completely ignorant of the actual condition of that island, or, even if they could indulge the vain hope of being able to bring its numerous population once more into subjection, they could not at least consider the restoration of the ancient system as an achievement of such easy and expeditious accomplishment. Are they ignorant of the issue of the last invasion of St. Domingo? For a time, indeed, Buonaparte's general deceived the generous nature of Toussaint, then the chieftain of the Blacks; to whose good faith, as well as other eminent qualities, the British commander-in-chief, General Maitland, bore the highest testimony.* Toussaint, being himself of unimpeachable truth and rectitude, was too backward to suspect the perfidy of others; and, for a time, the Blacks appeared to be lulled into acquiescence in French superiority. But no sooner did the real nature of the intentions of the French Commander to restore the state of slavery become manifest, than the Negroes universally flew to arms; and, though General Le Clerc, aided but too well by his second in command, having exhausted every resource of artifice and cruelty, deliberately and systematically proceeded to exterminate those whose spirits, so long as they should exist, he found unconquerable, yet all his efforts were vain, and the small remainder of the 70,000 French troops, who had been sent on that ill-fated expedition, were only saved by surrendering themselves up as prisoners of war to their British enemies. Le Clerc's cruelties were too shocking to be now described. But they, as well as his faithlessness, live fresh in the remembrance of the surviving children and relatives of the wretched victims; and have assisted in inspiring them with a determined and unalterable resolution to resist every approximation towards the imposition of that

* See the History of Toussaint Louverture, printed in London, first in 1803, republished in 1814; a most interesting narrative, compiled from official documents and authentic intelligence, by a highly respectable member of the British Parliament. See *Pamphleteer*, No. viii. p. 311.

abhorred yoke (so Toussaint termed it), to which the merchants of the Chamber of Commerce of Nantes conceive the Negroes can be brought so readily to submit. And I solemnly assure the Chamber of Commerce, that I have learned, from authentic information (*and let me recommend the fact to their most serious attention, and still more to that of the French Government,*) that the disposition, which France has manifested, to recommence the Slave Trade, having become known to them, has converted into a fixed persuasion the apprehension, which was before felt in St. Domingo, that the restoration of peace with her European enemies would lead to a renewal of an attempt to impose on them once more the yoke of slavery. It is a persuasion, I will add, which nothing but the solemn renunciation of the Slave Trade for ever can remove. It is stated by the Chamber itself, that the increased ease and comfort, in which the St. Domingo Blacks have been passing the last twelve years, have produced a great increase in their number; and can they have rendered less distasteful to them the idea of a transition to the bitter bondage and degradation, which will be described to them by their more aged relatives? But the Chamber of Commerce is little aware, how much the St. Domingo population has increased in intelligence as well as in number, during the last ten or twelve years; how much, in short, it has been raised in the scale of being; consequently, how much better qualified it is, as well as more disposed, to resist its assailants. Little does the Chamber of Commerce think of the seas of blood through which they would have to wade to their object, even if by such a price that object could be purchased. But will the benevolent monarch, who now sits on the throne of France, will his enlightened ministers engage his brave soldiers in such an unequal combat, in which that very climate and those very labors are to an European soldier no less than death, which to their opponents are congenial and even salutary? Will they sacrifice army after army? Will they thus profusely dissipate the blood and treasure of their country, after it has been so long bleeding at every pore? And all for what? To regain—at such a cost as the acquisition of a great and populous kingdom would insufficiently requite—the nominal right of ownership over lands, the whole population of which shall have been exterminated, and which must, therefore, be repopled, the works on them be rebuilt, and a new colony be set on foot, again probably to become, in its turn, the destruction of a fresh explosion, after an immensely prodigal waste of the national capital.

Be assured, Sir, I do far too much justice to the Chamber of Commerce of Nantes not to believe, that the earnest wish they show to recommence the Slave Trade could be accounted for by

no other supposition than that of their being under the influence of errors and prejudices similar to those which originally possessed the minds of our African and West Indian opponents. Like the latter, they have entirely forgotten, in their reasonings, the tendency in all human societies to augment their numbers, in obedience to the primeval command and law of our nature—Increase and multiply. They have been misled into an erroneous supposition, that the British have been encouraging the growth of tropical products in her East Indian empire, and sacrificing the interests of the West Indian settlements. The direct contrary is the fact; and it is matter of notoriety, that much heavier duties are imposed on the East Indian than the West Indian sugars, for the express purpose of enabling the latter to maintain its competition with the former: for, otherwise, the East Indian sugar would obtain a decided preference from its superior cheapness, notwithstanding the vastly greater distance from which it is brought; and, consequently, the greater expense of its conveyance.

But the Chamber of Commerce, in the warmth of its argument, reasons as if the Slave Trade were at this moment actually carrying on to its ancient extent, and talks of the revenue, that must be renounced, of the commerce, which must be extinguished, and of the artisans, who must be thrown out of employment by its sudden abolition. On the contrary, France has not now the poor excuse to plead, that the abolition would demand sacrifices, which she cannot afford to make. Not one solitary vessel, not a single seaman, not a livre of capital is now employed in the Slave Trade: not a single manufacturer or artisan is occupied in fabricating goods for it. She would only establish *by law* that same discontinuance of the traffic, which, for twenty years, has subsisted *in fact*. All the foreign commerce of Nantes has been suspended by the revolutionary war, all the various paths of commercial enterprise lie open before her, and she has now to choose for herself some occupation for her industry and her capital. When once made acquainted with the real nature and consequences of the Slave Trade, is that the line she will select for herself? I could prove to her merchants, that the Slave Trade is, on established commercial principles, a highly ineligible traffic. That it is in its nature a lottery, an uncertain and fluctuating commerce; a trade, also, which slowly returns the capital employed in it. But if she wishes to trade with Africa, is it in the bodies of its inhabitants only that a commerce with Africa is to be carried on? Want of time compels me to suppress all I could say to you on this most important branch of the argument. But it is the less necessary for me to enlarge on this subject, because it has already been discussed, with unanswerable force, in Mr. Clarkson's *Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*; and the arguments, on which I have

here faintly touched, have been recently urged, with invincible power of reasoning, by M. Sismond de Sismondi; an author, whose high literary reputation gives additional weight to all the sentiments he expresses. I will only, therefore, affirm, that, when we consider the almost boundless extent of the African continent, its vast population, and the innumerable productions which its climate and its soil spontaneously offer, or by cultivation would supply to us, and, on the authority of Mr. Parke, I will add, when we take into account the commercial dispositions of its people, we cannot doubt but that a commerce with Africa might soon be instituted far greater and more profitable than the trade in Slaves; a commerce, which has been hitherto prevented only by the dissociating and barbarising influence of that detestable system, strangely misnamed a *trade*, since, from first to last, it is in its nature anti-commercial. It deserves attention, also, that the possessions surrendered by England on the coast of Africa command districts which, both from their productions and the character of their population, offer peculiar facilities for opening a legitimate trade. The true question, therefore, for the merchants of Nantes to ask themselves, even as to Africa, is not whether they shall carry on the trade in Slaves, or none at all, but whether they will carry on a commerce worthy of the name, a just and humane, a civilizing, and consequently, above all, a growing commerce, the ultimate extent of which exceeds all powers of calculation; or whether, with this boundless field of commercial enterprise opening to their view, they will forbear to enter it, and will return to the detestable traffic in Slaves now, when all its abominations are announced to them, and carry it on for a few years, till, its unutterable abominations having become as generally known in your country as they are in ours, they will be forced to abandon it with remorse and shame.

But, if the Chamber of Commerce of Nantes distrust my speculations, let me refer them to experience.—Liverpool was the Nantes of Great Britain. It had by far the largest share of the trade in Slaves, and its commercial delegates were the most strenuous and persevering opponents of the abolition: its representatives in Parliament were instructed to declare, that the abolition would reduce that populous and flourishing town to beggary and ruin. Parliament, however, was not deterred. The trade was abolished; and that, too, *when it was in full vigor*. Mark the sequel. But a few years have since elapsed; yet not only have no complaints been made of declining commerce, but even Liverpool herself now joins the rest of the kingdom in condemning that detested traffic.

Let me confess to you, Sir, that I am deeply mortified and disappointed by the accounts I hear of the disposition, that is too

commonly manifested by your countrymen, respecting the renewal of the Slave Trade. I had not merely trusted, that we should meet in France with few opponents ; but I had indulged sanguine hopes, that, in its spirited and intelligent population, we should find a zealous co-operation in the various plans which had been set on foot in England for enlightening and improving the natives of Africa. For, when the Nation first awoke to the real nature of the Slave Trade, and the abolition was expected to take place, a colony was settled in the river Sierra Leone, in Africa, with a view to promote among the natives the arts and blessings of civilized life. That part of Africa had been long the seat of an extensive Slave Trade. Its population was greatly thinned, and the character of that which remained was very unpromising. Yet we were not disheartened. Schools were instituted, agriculture and industry encouraged ; but little progress could be made, till the Slave Trade was extinguished. While the appetites of the natives were stimulated, by the offer of their wonted gratifications, to the commission of their accustomed crimes, it was a difficult attempt to endeavour to divert their industry into innocent channels, though there were some of them who had even then discerned and lamented the fatal effects of the Slave Trade on social improvement, as well as on individual security and comfort. Again—No sooner had we succeeded in obtaining a law forbidding British subjects to visit the unoffending shores of Africa, except for the purposes of an innocent commerce, than a society, called the African Institution, was formed for repairing the wrongs which our country had committed. Many of its members were men of the highest rank and character ; and at the head of it a Prince of the House of Brunswick, respected no less for his personal qualifications than for his illustrious descent, appeared in his natural and family character, that of the protector of the oppressed. It is the grateful office of this benevolent institution to watch over the actual execution of the law by which the Slave Trade is prohibited ; to plant and foster in that much-injured land the seeds of knowledge and improvement ; and to excite the honest industry, and promote the growing civilization of her inhabitants. I had long flattered myself, that, whenever peace should be restored between Great Britain and France, you would join us in promoting this beneficent project. Our colony of Sierra Leone had, indeed, in 1794, been almost crushed in its infancy, by a French force ; but this was an effort of the same revolutionary fury as filled your own country with misery and tears. The hostility of such men to a settlement, the object of which was to substitute an innocent and peaceful commerce in the place of the Slave Trade, was perfectly natural ; their attachment to the Slave Trade was in character ; their connexion with Slave

Traders congenial. But I doubted not, that, when France should have come under a milder regimen, Sierra Leone would find in her a protectress and a friend; I even indulged the pleasing prospect, that our own Government, consenting to make Sierra Leone no longer exclusively a British Colony, all the European nations might be entitled in it to equal privileges, and know only the generous rivalry of those, who should be contending, on equal terms; which should be foremost in the race of Christian liberality and beneficence. Under these impressions, no sooner did the day star of Peace appear above the horizon, the welcome harbinger of returning concord and amity between our too-long hostile countries, than, with a joyful heart, I moved an Address to the Crown, which received the unanimous and eager support of the House of Commons, a similar Address being voted, with the same zealous unanimity, in the House of Lords. The object of both was, that, in any negociation for peace, all the great European Nations should be invited to unite with us in taking effectual measures for an immediate and universal abolition of the African Slave Trade. I will frankly own to you, Sir, that it appeared to me to be peculiarly congenial with the genius and dispositions of the French People, to assent to such a proposition with more than common cordiality. Calling to mind your history and character; recollecting, that you had been styled a nation of cavaliers, and that among you commerce was not even estimated at its true value, but was accounted a degrading and ignoble occupation; retracing, also, the awful history of your revolutionary war, and seeing that your gallantry had never been more conspicuous, your victories never more brilliant, and that, from a thousand causes, a military spirit had been universally diffused among you;—that, in whatever other particulars, therefore, your former character had been changed, it was not likely that you could have contracted a grovelling and mercenary spirit:—I could least of all have anticipated so strange and monstrous an anomaly, as that your avidity for commercial gain should have suddenly become so extreme, as to cause you to rush with eagerness into those dishonorable paths, which had been quitted by several other nations, in obedience to the laws of justice and of honor. Least of all could I have thought it possible, that any considerable number of your people could so far misconstrue the invitation to concur with us in the benevolent designs which I have specified, as to have imagined that we were dictating to you, or assuming a tone of moral superiority, or wishing in some way to defraud or injure you. Far from us were any such ungenerous ideas! I can only regard the imputation as a melancholy effect of the long prevalence of the hostile spirit between our two countries, which, in those whose minds could form such a conception as this,

had not yet given way to the feelings with which, I trust, all the friends of Africa are actuated towards you, of friendly cordiality and neighbourly good will.—Suffer me here, Prince, for a moment, to quit my immediate subject, and to congratulate you on the progress of those sounder as well as more benevolent principles of political economy, which, instead of founding the elevation and prosperity of our country on the depression and impoverishment of its neighbours, have ascertained, that each is benefited by the growing affluence of another; and that thus all may be interested in the improvement and prosperity of all.

It was under the full influence of this spirit, Prince, that we accosted you on the subject of the Slave Trade. As those, who, having ourselves discovered the fraudulent and cruel character of that detested commerce, invited you to partake with us in the benefits of the discovery. As those, who were confident, that your high-spirited people would never tarnish the lustre of their national character by recommencing the commerce of the human species, when its radical and incurable wickedness and cruelty should have been clearly developed. Nor will I suffer myself to be discouraged. I ascribe any lukewarmness which may prevail among you, to the want of information; for I am well aware, that some of your ablest men have been misled into the grossest errors and prejudices concerning the Africans; I cannot but be persuaded, that, when that information shall have been once diffused among you, it will produce the same effects as among ourselves.

Your sovereign is beneficent and generous. It is his glory to occupy the throne which was filled by the generous and benevolent Henry IV. The French are a great and high spirited people, and that same Henry is their admiration and their boast. How can I then conceive it to be possible, that, when once they shall be made acquainted with the real nature of this abhorred traffic, they will be able to endure the idea, that their sovereign's restoration to the throne of his ancestors is to be commemorated for ever in the page of history as the æra at which, in their eager pursuit of commercial profits, they plunged afresh, as it were, into the blood and mire of the lowest depths of cruelty and dishonor; of

¹ I allude, especially, to a passage which I lately read with astonishment, in Mr. Malouet's fifth volume of *Colonial Pieces*: "Il est aujourd'hui constaté, par des observations multipliées, notamment par celles de Mr. Mungo Park, qui vient de parcourir en philosophe l'intérieur de l'Afrique, qu'en achetant des Esclaves, dans cette partie du monde, on les soustrait, à une mort certaine, ou à des traitemens pires que la mort."—No such statement is to be found in Mr. Park's *Travels*; and every one, who reads his book, must acknowledge, that his representations of the condition of the Africans, in their own country, give a directly opposite impression.

commercial profits too, declared by the ablest statesmen and financiers to be highly questionable, or rather clearly impolitic ! Still less can I conceive this to be possible, when I call to mind the opposite example, which has been set by other nations ; when I consider, that the French would act thus at the very time when a neighbouring and rival nation, accused, not wholly perhaps without reason, of being somewhat too earnest in its pursuit of commercial gain ; when Great Britain had, with an unanimous voice, abandoned those paths of commerce, as unfit, from their injustice and inhumanity, to be trodden by the feet of freemen, still less by those of Christians ; and this, though Great Britain had a vast capital engaged in the Slave Trade, several thousand tons of shipping, and of sailors, vast exports of manufactures, and multitudes of artizans employed in fabricating them ; yet, with all these motives for continuing the trade, that commercial, that shop-keeping nation, as she had been denominated, hesitated not to obey the dictates of conscience and of honor. True ; Great Britain had sacrifices to make to a prodigious value : but like the Ephesians, so honorably recorded in Sacred Writ for having cast into the flames their precious books of incantations, she generously flung from her with indignation those polluted gains, and willingly abjured them for ever, as base and abhorred memorials of the guilt and shame of her days of ignorance. Can I believe the French will thus give way to the lust of commercial profits, at a time when the United Netherlands, a state of which commerce has been considered to be the vital spirit, have generously assented to the wishes of their beneficent sovereign, and, without a dissenting voice, have abjured for ever those unhallowed and bloody profits ? When they see, that, long ago, the king of Denmark generously took the lead in this career of mercy, and, though not unconscious that the nation he governed must rely on its commercial industry for its prosperity, and almost for its comfortable existence, yet renounced these foul and cruel paths to wealth, and made the true use of his absolute power, by commanding his subjects at once to depart out of them for ever ? Finally, when the Legislature of the United States of America, also, though to the shame of Great Britain it must be acknowledged, while under her dominion, deeply plunged in the abominations of the Slave Trade, and though sordid individuals among them still frequent this disgraceful field of enterprise, hesitated not, at the very first moment at which by the forms of their constitution it was possible, solemnly to condemn this wicked commerce. And can it be possible that France, so great, so high-minded a people, will debase herself by grasping at those polluted gains, which all these nations have cast from them with indignation and abhorrence ? Nor can it be de-

nied, that the misconduct of France, if I may be permitted to term it misconduct, in carrying on the Slave Trade, would receive every possible aggravation from the attendant circumstances. It is not merely, as I have already remarked, that you have no sacrifices to make, no losses to incur ; but farther, since the trade in man has been for many years practically discontinued, you cannot plead for it the excuse of established habits, or inveterate prejudices ; *you*, in truth, would *begin a new Slave Trade*. While the contest was yet depending in this country, there was but one man who did not earnestly protest, that, if the trade in Slaves were not actually in existence, he would never have endured the idea of commencing it. But, above all, consider at what a period you would recommence it. Is it at the very moment when you are blessed yourselves with a rich augmentation of your enjoyments, and when a generous people should be eager to express its sense of the goodness of Providence, by diffusing the same comforts among others, that you would deluge the unoffending Africans with an ocean of miseries ? Should the restoration of peace to Europe be the signal for kindling a thousand ferocious wars among wretched tribes of half civilized beings, whom every humane feeling should dispose you to protect and to reclaim ? Could I really retain towards France any hostile feelings, I should wish that she might thus tarnish the lustre of her name ; that her sovereign's restoration to his throne might be thus commemorated in the page of history. Were I actuated by that base selfishness, which the Commercial Chamber of Nantes imputes to me, I should wish to retain for my own country the undivided honor of this glorious enterprise. Were I a bigoted Protestant, rather than a sincere Christian, I might rejoice to see the votaries of the Roman Catholic faith thus sanctioning the violation of the plainest principles of the religion of Jesus. But no such unworthy sentiments as these find admission into my bosom ; larger and nobler principles animate my heart, and actuate my conduct. May the French, from my soul I say it, may the French be a great and renowned, a religious and a happy people ! May the commerce of Nantes be flourishing, and her merchants affluent ! But let me not speak of *myself* only ; my countrymen in general are lovers of peace and good will towards men. How many have I not heard expressing their earnest wishes for the prosperity and comfort of the people of France ? How gladly would they not forward any plan for advancing them ? And these dispositions, like those which have actuated them in the case of the abolition of the Slave Trade, are not transient sensibilities merely, but fixed and stable principles ; they have their root in the persuasion, that we all are the children of one Common Parent, and that we shall most acceptably manifest our gratitude to

Him for our own enjoyments, by endeavouring to augment the happiness of others.

But let the Commercial Chamber of Nantes acknowledge, if they will not give us credit for these benevolent motives, that we at least take shame to ourselves, when we confess the guilt and cruelty of practices, of which we ourselves had by far the greatest share. We are the rather bound to endeavour to prevail on other nations to abstain from this inhuman traffic, because we cannot but be conscious, that we may have drawn others into it by our example; and therefore, that no small portion of the miseries of Africa may be justly chargeable on us. But, farther, were we to satisfy ourselves by merely withdrawing from the trade ourselves, surely there might be reason to fear, that other nations would occupy the void which should be caused by our retiring; and thus, though we might have wiped away the bloody stain from the character of our own nation, Africa might profit nothing from the change. We were compelled, therefore, by the most sacred obligations of duty, to stand forward, and proclaim to the world the wickedness and cruelty of our former conduct; that, as we had been foremost in the crime, we might be most active and exemplary in our repentance. Animated by these generous and humane motives, we looked around for coadjutors. In whom was it so natural for us to hope to find them, as in your countrymen? Nor am I discouraged by the rejection of our proposal and the misconstruction of our motives, by the merchants of Nantes: the case was the same among ourselves. It is natural, that the old prejudices and errors should linger longest in the place where the Slave Trade had been carried on most extensively; that they, whose friends and connexions had been concerned in the traffic, should cling to old opinions, and refuse to admit unpleasant truths. But, surely, we may expect better things from the higher classes of your countrymen. They stand on a higher level: their views extend farther and take a wider range. It is their office, therefore, and I trust they will fulfil its duties, to point the way to truth and wisdom; and it is theirs to provide against the evils which an obstinate adherence to ancient principles would infallibly produce; it is theirs to prevent the wealth of their country, that seed corn, which, sown in a proper soil, would bring forth an abundant harvest, from being consumed in speculations of injustice and cruelty, from which it would soon be driven by the execration of mankind. Encourage, rather, its employment in a legitimate commerce, in which every step that is taken, even in Africa itself, will open your way to new fields of enterprise, of boundless extent and inestimable produce. Your people not being yet informed concerning the nature of the Slave Trade, it might appear to you

expedient to treat the public mind gently, and propose its termination after five years, rather than its immediate abolition. But I cannot doubt, that, thoroughly conversant as you are with the principles of commerce, you will see the inexpediency of suffering your merchants merely to enter into a traffic, which, in five years, you mean to abandon. If, indeed, I could suppose it possible that it could be intended to suffer the French Slave Trade to be carried on for five years, altogether without restriction, I should indeed shudder at the frightful consequences, which would probably follow, both in Africa and in the Western Hemisphere. The very permission, combined with the condemnation which has been expressed of the trade, on moral grounds, would be equivalent to an acknowledgment, that prodigious profits were to be derived from it. For surely the merchants might reasonably infer, that, at the very moment when you had pronounced the trade unjust and inhuman, you would not have sanctioned it, even for five years, for any inconsiderable gain. Dreadful, indeed, might be the consequences. The eagerness of your traders, thus excited, and stimulated by the consciousness that they must make the most of the time allowed them, would draw your capital from other and better lines of commerce, to pour it into the African channel. Your ships and sailors, drawn from more salubrious climates, would press into this most pestilential of all voyages. The cruel avidity of the slave takers, in all their varied forms of fraud and violence, would be roused to tenfold exertions, and would increase in the same proportion the devastation and miseries of Africa. The eagerness of the planters to buy slaves, while they yet should be to be purchased, would produce vast importations of them into your colonies. And all this—that, at the end of five years, your planters, your merchants, your ship-owners, your manufacturers, your artisans, (not a single individual of whom would suffer from the abolition of the Slave Trade, if it were *now* to take place,) might at the end of five years sustain a sudden reversion, a violent innovation, the suddenness of such commercial changes being that alone which has ever been deemed at all injurious.

But what must be expected to be the consequences in your West Indian empire? Remember the consequences which five years' increased importation of Slaves previously to 1789, combined, I grant, with other circumstances, produced in St. Domingo.¹ There behold an open volcano, with the lava scarcely cool which

¹ See Barre St. Venant's Colonies Modernes. The importation in 1789 and 1790 was 60,000. Arnould (Balance de Commerce) gives the importation of 1786, 1787, and 1788, at 30,000 each, making the importation of these five years 150,000.

it so lately poured forth! Do not you hear the inward thundings of the mountain? Do you not see the ascending smoke that issues from the crater? Do they not warn you against beginning again to increase so rapidly the importations into your remaining islands, lest in them also the same fatal consequences should follow? When your mansion is already hot with the fire that rages in a dwelling so near you, is it a time to be annually bringing in, though but for five years, fresh ship loads of combustibles? Surely your sounder policy would be to use the precious interval, that is yet afforded you, in laying the foundations of those changes, which might gradually improve the condition of the slave population in your West Indian islands from its present state, to the condition of a comfortable and happy peasantry. Thus you would render them the means of your security, instead of being, as they now are, the sources of your weakness, and the object of your alarm. Nothing so obstructs the introduction of those beneficial changes as the continual influx of new Negroes recently torn from their native land, burning with indignation and longing for revenge, fresh from the horrors of a slave ship and the abominable indignities of a negro sale; in short, under the full impression of all their insufferable wrongs. And can you hope to make any amicable settlement with the St. Domingo Negroes, when you are thus proving to them that you regard the negro race as out of the pale of humane feeling or even of moral obligation? Must you not be inspiring them with an invincible longing to fly to the assistance of their countrymen, to enable them to burst their bonds? Whereas your exhibiting a decisive proof, that you were at length become sensible of the wrongs of Africa, and willing to redress them, might open a way to an amicable settlement with the immense island of St. Domingo, and a connexion with her improved population, far more profitable to France than any which can be expected under the old system of management.

Forgive me, Prince, for asking the question—If it be not unworthy of statesmen and of patriots to catch at the breath of present popularity by humoring the prejudices and errors of the day, instead of calling your misguided people from the paths of error, into the ways no less of sound policy than of justice and humanity? Surely, if the people of France, from ignorance, do now wish to enter into the Slave Trade, yet, when once they shall have become acquainted with its real character, they will acknowledge no obligation to their rulers for having complied with that wish. When, hereafter, they shall have seen its enormities; when they

¹ See Pinkard's Notes on the West Indies, vol. iii. pp. 353—358.

shall have discovered its impolicy, "We had been misled," they will hereafter say, "into believing, that the Africans were incurably stupid, indolent, and savage, inferior, both in intellectual and moral qualities, to the rest of mankind : that Africa, in short, afforded no openings for a commercial connexion with more civilized nations ; but, to our astonishment, we now learn, that, in all these particulars, the very contrary is the truth, more especially as to the Africans of the interior. We learn this from the publications of the Slave Traders themselves, before the fear of abolition had led them to calumniate the Africans. Still more, we learn it from the recent reports of the very travellers, who, to their shame, had been seduced into a sort of half defending of the Slave Trade—from Park and Golberry. We find, that, except so far as the social intercourse of the Africans was poisoned, and their manners and habits corrupted by the Slave Trade, they are eminently gentle, well disposed, and industrious. Their country abounds in native products and valuable minerals, especially in gold. With these articles for barter, the populous districts and large cities of the interior of Africa would create a new and immense demand for the products of our soil and the fruits of our industry. We were ignorant of all these commercial advantages that were offered to us on the one hand, as, on the other, we were strangers also to those enormities of the Slave Trade, which are now laid open to our view. But could you, to whom all these things were known, could you pay so poor a compliment either to our understandings or our hearts ; could you so little provide for our interests or our honor, as to humor our ignorance and our prejudices, instead of endeavouring to enlighten the one and remove the other ? And when, from the higher elevation which you occupied, your prospect was not darkened by the clouds which obstructed our view, and when a way into the interior of Africa was opened to your eyes ; a way broad and safe, though too long untrodden, for the entrance of an innocent and honorable commerce ; how could you rather, in compliance with the mercenary avidity of a few misguided individuals, re-open those base and bloody paths, the reproach of civilized and Christian Europe ? How could you endeavour to build up again that barrier which the Slave Trade had erected against the entrance into Africa of light and knowledge, when some breaches had already been made in it, and you were called on to join in razing it to the ground ?"

Such, Prince, I cannot doubt, will be the feelings, such the language of your people, in a few short years ; whatever, from a misconception of facts, may be their present sentiments and views.

¹ See a few short extracts in the Appendix.

Recognise, then, and occupy your true station. Take, then, that lead in this generous and politic enterprise, which becomes the character of an enlightened and liberal people. Act in a manner worthy of the antiquity and greatness of your Empire. If you conceive that the disinterestedness and liberality of your motives, and your being free from all external influence, will appear more clear by your not mixing any stipulations concerning the Slave Trade with the general negotiation, take your measures separately. But let us not be disappointed in the hopes we had formed, that your influence would be used with the other European Nations. Be, rather, the continental head of the brotherhood of Justice and Beneficence. It was formerly customary for princes to celebrate the birth of a son, or any other acceptable event, by some act of mercy or munificence. So let the æra of the restoration of your Sovereign to the throne of his ancestors be marked, in the page of history, as the æra, also, at which Africa was delivered from her tormentors, and her much injured population were restored to the enjoyment of their just claim to the rights and privileges of the human species.

I have the honor to be,

MONSEIGNEUR,

Your most obedient,

And most humble servant,

W. WILBERFORCE.

Appendix.

EXTRACTS

FROM

VARIOUS AUTHORS

(Not Advocates for the Abolition of the Slave Trade,)

DESIGNED

TO ILLUSTRATE SOME PARTS OF THE ARGUMENT URGED IN THE
PRECEDING LETTER.

THE following passages are quoted from authorities the most unexceptionable that can be imagined in this discussion; viz. from writers who either lived before the commencement of the traffic, or shew themselves decidedly hostile to the Abolition. The number of these extracts might be indefinitely multiplied; but as they are given rather to illustrate than to prove the parts of the case to which they refer, it is not necessary to insert all that may be found.

Mr. Smith, who was in the employment of the African Company, says, That the discerning natives account it their greatest unhappiness, that they were ever visited by the Europeans. They say, that we Christians introduced the Traffic of Slaves, and that before our coming they lived in peace; "but," say they, "it is observable, that wherever Christianity comes, there comes with it a sword, a gun, powder and ball." Voyage, p. 266.

Monsieur Brue, who was Director General of the French Senegal Company, and resided eleven years in Africa, in giving a full description of the Trade, with the most friendly opinion of it says: "The Europeans are far from desiring to act as peacemakers amongst them. It would be too contrary to their interests; for the only object of their wars is to carry off Slaves: and as these make the principal part of their traffic, they would be apprehensive of drying up the source of it, were they to encourage these people to live well together.

"According to the wars which these people have with each other, and their success, the Slave Trade here is better or worse." Again:

"The neighbourhood of the Damel and Tin keep them perpetually at war, the benefit of which accrues to the Company, who buy all the prisoners made on either side, and the more there are to sell, the greater is their profit; for the only end of their armaments is to make captives, to sell them to the white traders.

"Their campaigns are usually incursions to plunder and pillage; and they have every thing they wish to aim at from their wars, when they are able to make captives from one another, because that it is the best merchandize they have to trade with the Europeans. Avarice, and the desire of making Slaves, in order to have wherewith to buy European commodities, are often the veritable motives for going to war.

"This prince and the other negro kings have not always Slaves to treat with: but they have always a sure and ready way of supplying the deficiency, that is, by making inroads upon their own subjects, carrying them off, and selling them; for which they never want pretensions in order to justify their pillage and rapine, when those they have seized have relations in a situation to resent the injury." Vol. IV. pp. 147. 217; and V. pp. 115. 133.

Mr. Moore, who was factor to the Royal African Company for seven years, says,

"Whenever the King of Barsally wants goods, or brandy, he sends a messenger to our Governor at James Fort, to desire he would send a sloop there with a cargo. This news being not at all unwelcome, the Governor sends accordingly. Against the arrival of the said sloop, the King goes and ransacks some of his enemies' towns, seizing the people, and selling them for such commodities as he is in want of, which commonly are brandy or rum, gunpowder, balls, guns, pistols, and cutlasses for his attendants and soldiers, and coral and silver for his wives and concubines. In case he is not at war with any neighbouring king, he then falls upon one of his own towns, which are numerous, and uses them in the very same manner. It is owing to the King's insatiable thirst after brandy, that his subjects' freedom and families are in so precarious a situation; for he very often goes with some of his troops by a town in the day time, and returns in the night, and sets fire to three parts of it, and sets guards to the fourth, to seize the people as they run out from the fire. He ties their arms behind them, and marches them to the place where he sells them, which is either Joar or Cabone. 'Yesterday, 20th March, 1732,' says *Moore*, 'the King fell upon one of his own towns, and having taken a good many prisoners, brought them along with him, with intent to sell them to Captain Clarke, a separate trader, now at anchor at Rambo's Port.' p. 173.

"When the native princes put a stop to trade, it is true," says *M. Brue*, "that the French have been forced sometimes to make use of violent means themselves; and not being able to get the princes to discharge the loans they had borrowed from the Company, they have pillaged some village, seized the inhabitants and carried them off for Slaves: after which, they have balanced accounts with the King:

and if they had seized more Slaves than they ought, in balance of the account, they have paid him the difference."

"But these expedients," he adds, "are not always successful, and though one was even sure of being paid by these sorts of executions; *il faut en user sobrement*," says he, "one should not have recourse to them too frequently, lest it should draw the ill-will of the country upon us, and sooner or later we should be made to repent of going thus violently to work." p. 198.

Artus, Barbot, Bosman, Loyer, Nyendaël, &c. inform us, that in their time all crimes were punished by mulcts and fines; but since the introduction of the Slave Trade, Slavery has become the universal punishment.

Mr. Moore, above quoted, says—

"Since this Trade has been used, all punishments are changed into Slavery. There being an advantage in such condemnation, they strain for crimes very hard, in order to get the benefit of selling the criminal. Not only murder, theft, and adultery, are punished by selling the criminal for a Slave, but every trifling crime is punished in the same manner." p. 42.

The difference between a domestic Slave in Africa and a Negro transported to the West Indies may also be learnt from Mr. Moore: "Some people," says he, "have a good many house slaves, which is their greatest glory; and they live so well and easy, that it is sometimes a hard matter to know the slaves from their masters or mistresses; they very often being better clothed, especially the females, who have sometimes coral, amber, and silver, about their hands and wrists to the value of 20*l.* or 30*l.* sterling. Many of the slaves are born in their families. There is a whole village near Boncoe of two hundred people, who are all the wives, slaves, or children of one man. I never heard of but one that ever sold a family slave, except for such crimes as would have made them to be sold had they been free. If there are many family slaves, and one of them commits a crime, the master cannot sell him without the joint consent of the rest; for if he does, they will all run away, and be protected by the next kingdom to which they fly." p. 110.

Bosman informs us, "That the inhabitants of Coto, upon the Slave Coast, depend upon the Slave Trade; for their most advantageous trade is taking a journey inland, and stealing men. It is the best part of their subsistence." p. 308.

The name of Mr. Park, the celebrated African traveller, must be well known in France; but it may not be so well known that that interesting publication, the account of his travels, was drawn up and published by Mr. Bryan Edwards, one of the ablest and also the warmest opponents of the Abolitionists. "War," he observes, "is certainly the most general and most productive source of slavery." p. 292. He says, there are two kinds of warfare; one similar to that which prevails among all nations, the other peculiar to Africa: it is called *tegria*, or plunder, and is thus described:—

"Wars of this description are generally conducted with great secrecy. A few resolute individuals, headed by some person of enter-

prise and courage, march quietly through the woods, surprise in the night some unprotected village, and carry inhabitants and their effects, before their neighbours can come to their assistance. One morning, during my stay at Kamalia, we were all much alarmed by a party of this kind. The king of Fooladoo's son, with five hundred horsemen, passed secretly through the woods, a little to the southward of Kamalia, on the morning following, plundered three towns belonging to Madigai, a powerful chief in Jallonkadoo.

"The success of this expedition encouraged the governor of Bangassi, a town in Fooladoo, to make a second inroad upon another part of the same country. Having assembled about two hundred of his people, he passed over the river Kokoro in the night, and carried off a great number of prisoners. Several of the inhabitants who had escaped these attacks were afterwards seized by the Mandingoes, as they wandered about in the woods or concealed themselves in the glens and strong places of the mountains.

"These plundering excursions always produce speedy retaliation; and when large parties cannot be collected for the purpose, a few friends will combine together, and advance into the enemy's country, with a view to plunder, to carry off the inhabitants. A single individual has been known to take his bow and quiver, and proceed in like manner; conceal himself among the bushes, until some young or unarmed person passes by. He then, tiger-like, springs upon his prey; drags his victim into the thicket, and in the night carries him off as a slave."—p. 293.

"Early in the morning, the remainder of the Moors departed from the town. They had, during their stay, committed many acts of robbery; and this morning, with the most unparalleled audacity, they seized upon three girls, who were bringing water from the wells, and carried them into slavery." p. 166.

See also p. 336.

"When a Negro takes up goods on credit from any of the Europeans on the coast, and does not make payment at the time appointed, the European is authorised, by the laws of the country, to seize upon the debtor himself, if he can find him; or if he cannot be found, on any person of his family; or, in the last resort, on any native of the same kingdom." p. 296.

Mr. Park agrees with all other writers on the state of Africa, in describing the circumstances of the domestic slaves as easy and comfortable, and in admitting that they can only be sold to foreigners, in cases which authorize the sale of free men, such as capture in war, condemnation for certain crimes, &c.

"In all the laborious occupations above described, the master and his slaves work together, without any distinction of superiority." p. 286.

"The domestic slaves, or such as are born in a man's own house, are treated with more lenity than those which are purchased with money. The authority of the master over the domestic slaves, as I have elsewhere observed, extends only to reasonable correction: for

the master cannot sell his domestic, without having first brought him to public trial before the chief men of the place." p. 287.

That the barbarism, depopulation, and barrenness of Africa increase as we approach the mouths of the rivers and the bays on the western coast, is a general fact, amply testified by Mr. Park, and, as I have stated in my letter, is so repugnant to the history of mankind in every other region, that it furnishes the strongest support to the statements of those who attribute the incivilization of this continent to the Slave Trade. As he proceeds eastward he says,

"The towns were now more numerous, and the land that is not employed in cultivation affords excellent pasturage for large herds of cattle; but, owing to the great concourse of people daily going to and returning from Sego, the inhabitants are less hospitable to strangers." p. 191.

Compare the following passages, extracted as a specimen, from Mr. Park's Travels, with Mons. Malouet's statement of the condition of the Negroes in the interior of Africa.

Park's surprize on entering into the interior of Africa, is thus described:—

"I had a most enchanting prospect of the country: the number of towns and villages, and the extensive cultivation around them, surpassed every thing I had ever seen in Africa. We departed from Loomoo, and continued our route along the banks of the Krieks, which are every where well cultivated, and warm with inhabitants. Cultivation is carried on here on a very extensive scale. From the best inquiries I could make, I have reason to believe that Sego, about, perhaps, a thousand miles from the sea coast, contains altogether about thirty thousand inhabitants. The view of this extensive city, the numerous canoes upon the river, the crowded population and the cultivated state of the surrounding country, formed altogether a prospect of civilization and magnificence, which I little expected to find in the bosom of Africa."—pp. 195, 196.

"About eight o'clock we passed a large town called Kabba, situated in the midst of a beautiful and highly-cultivated country, bearing a greater resemblance to the centre of England, than to what I should have supposed had been the middle of Africa."—p. 202.

"We passed, in the course of the day, a great many villages, inhabited chiefly by fishermen; and in the evening, about five o'clock, arrived at Sansanding, a very large town, containing, as I was told, from eight to ten thousand inhabitants."—p. 203. "Passing by a creek or harbour, I observed twenty large canoes, most of them fully loaded, and covered with mats, to prevent the rain from injuring the goods."—p. 206.

"The Negroes in general, and the Mandingoes in particular, are considered by the Whites on the coast, as an indolent and inactive people; I think, without reason. Few people work harder, when occasion requires, than the Mandingoes; but, not having many opportunities of turning to advantage the superfluous produce of their labor, they are content with cultivating as much ground only as is necessary for their own support."—pp. 280, 281.

"It was not possible for me to behold the wonderful fertility of the soil, the vast herds of cattle, proper both for labor and food, and a variety of other circumstances favorable to colonization and agriculture; and reflect withal, on the means which presented themselves of a vast inland navigation, without lamenting that a country, so abundantly gifted and favored by nature, should remain in its present savage and neglected state."—p. 312.

But nothing in Mr. Park's work is more deserving of our attention than his description of the negro character and dispositions, in all those places where the Slave Trade has left them in their natural state. See the anecdote in p. 69. See also the return of the blacksmith to his home:—

"When we arrived at the blacksmith's place of residence, we dismounted and fired our muskets. The meeting between him and his relations was very tender: for these rude children of nature, free from restraint, display their emotions in the strongest and most impressive manner. Amidst these transports, the blacksmith's aged mother was led forth, leaning upon a staff. Every one made way for her; and she stretched out her hand to bid her son welcome. Being totally blind, she stroked his hands, arms, and face, with great care, and seemed highly delighted that her latter days were blessed by his return, and that her ears once more heard the music of his voice. From this interview I was fully convinced, that whatever difference there is between the Negro and the European in the conformation of the nose and the color of the skin, there is none in the genuine sympathies and characteristic feelings of our common nature." p. 82.

The following incident is still more striking:—

"About sunset, however, as I was preparing to pass the night in this manner, and had turned my horse loose, that he might graze at liberty, a woman, returning from the labors of the field, stopped to observe me, and perceiving that I was weary and dejected, inquired into my situation, which I briefly explained to her; whereupon, with looks of great compassion, she took up my saddle and bridle, and told me to follow her. Having conducted me into her hut, she lighted up a lamp, spread a mat on the floor, and told me I might remain there for the night. Finding that I was very hungry, she said she would procure me something to eat. She accordingly went out, and returned in a short time with a very fine fish: which, having caused to be half broiled upon some embers, she gave me for supper. The rites of hospitality being thus performed towards a stranger in distress, my worthy benefactress (pointing to the mat, and telling me I might sleep there without apprehension) called to the female part of her family, who had stood gazing on me all the while with astonishment, to resume their task of spinning cotton; in which they continued to employ themselves great part of the night. They lightened their labor by songs; one of which was composed extempore, for I was myself the subject of it. It was sung by one of the young women, the rest joining in a sort of chorus. The air was sweet and plaintive, and the words, literally translated, were these:—'The winds roared, and the rains fell. The poor white man, faint and

weary, came and sat under our tree. He has no mother to bring him milk; no wife to grind his corn. *Chorus.* Let us pity the white man; no mother has he, &c. &c." Trifling as this recital may appear to the reader, to a person in my situation the circumstance was affecting in the highest degree. I was oppressed by such unexpected kindness; and sleep fled from my eyes. In the morning I presented my compassionate landlady with two of the four brass buttons which remained on my waistcoat; the only recompence I could make her." p. 197.

The picture which he gives of the ardent affection of the Negroes for their native country is in the highest degree beautiful and touching: it proves most clearly how severe upon such men must be their compulsory exile from their home.

"When their country has been desolated, and their ruined towns and villages deserted by the enemy, such of the inhabitants as have escaped the sword and the chain generally return, though with cautious steps, to the place of their nativity; for it seems to be the universal wish of mankind, to spend the evening of their days where they passed their infancy. The poor Negro feels this desire in its full force. To him, no water is sweet but what is drawn from his own well; and no tree has so cool and pleasant a shade as the tabba tree of his native village. When war compels him to abandon the delightful spot in which he first drew his breath, and seek for safety in some other kingdom, his time is spent in talking about the country of his ancestors; and no sooner is peace restored than he turns his back upon the land of strangers, rebuilds with haste his fallen walls, and exults to see the smoke ascend from his native village."

"I have been often gratified by observing the strength and tenderness of the attachment subsisting between mothers and sons."—*Winterbottom's Travels.*

"They" (the Africans) "are in general of mild external manners; but they possess a great share of pride, and are easily affected by an insult. One of the severest insults which can be offered to an African is to speak disrespectfully of his mother." p. 211. "The respect which they pay to old people is very great."

The hospitality of the Africans has been noticed by almost every traveller.

The progress which the Africans are capable of making in the arts appears clearly from the account which Mr. Park gives of their different manufactures—as salt, pp. 4. and 203; cotton-cloth, pp. 17 and 281; gunpowder, p. 116; rich dyes, p. 281; weaving and sewing, p. 282; tanned and dyed leather, iron smelting and manufacture, pp. 283, 285, 341, 348, and 349; gold smelting, and the manufacture of beautiful gold trinkets and ornaments, p. 285; soap, p. 341.

Their commercial habits appear to be equally confirmed, and their journeys, for the purposes of trade, are long and constant.—See pp. 4. 58. 203. 256. and 341.

Dr. Winterbottom in his Travels, made about 1796, says, "The Foulahs," in the country bordering on the Windward Coast of

Africa, "impart to leather a red color equal to that of morocco in beauty."

"Another class of men are equally celebrated as blacksmiths; besides making every kind of necessary utensil, they inlay the handles and chase the blades of swords, &c. with great neatness, and they make a variety of elegant fancy ornaments for the women, out of pieces of gold and silver dollars."

"A considerable degree of ingenuity in the arts with which they are acquainted, must be allowed to all these nations, and is evident in the construction of their houses, and the formation of a variety of domestic and agricultural utensils."

"They have various substitutes for hemp and flax, of which they make fishing lines and nets, equal in strength and durability to those of Europeans."

Africans' Natural Disposition.

FROM GOLBERRY'S TRAVELS, ABOUT 1786.

"The Foulhas of the banks of the Senegal are intelligent and industrious."

"The Mandings are likewise dispersed over the western countries: they are well informed, graceful, and active."

"The Jalofs are the finest Negroes of this part of Africa: they are tall and well made; their features are regular, their physiognomy is open, and inspires confidence. They are honest, hospitable, generous, and faithful. Their character is mild; they are inclined to good order and civilization, and possess an evident disposition for benevolent actions."

"Their character is in general honest and sincere; hospitality is a natural virtue among them." p. 93.

"Mandings are very active, intelligent, and cunning, in commercial affairs; notwithstanding which, their general character is very hospitable, sociable, and benevolent. Their women are also very lively, spirited, good, and agreeable." p. 146.

"The Negroes have both taste and ingenuity." p. 306.

"The women are always kind, attentive, and complaisant." — p. 309.

"All that I have said of the Negroes tends to prove that they are in general good men, naturally gentle and benevolent." p. 412.

"The picture I have given of the situation of the Blacks, and of the peaceable, careless, and simple life of these favorites of Nature, is by no means exaggerated."

"The Mandingoes in particular are a very gentle race; cheerful in their dispositions, inquisitive, credulous, simple, and fond of flattery."

"The maternal affection is every where conspicuous among them, and creates a correspondent return of tenderness in the child. An illustration of this has been given in p. 47. 'Strike me,' said my attendant, 'but do not curse my mother.'

"The same sentiment I found universally to prevail ; and observed in all parts of Africa, that the greatest affront that could be offered to a Negro, was to reflect on her who gave him birth." p. 264.

"One of the first lessons in which the Mandingo women instruct their children, is the *practice of truth*."

"During a wearisome peregrination of more than 500 British miles, exposed to the burning rays of a tropical sun, these poor Slaves, amidst their more infinitely greater sufferings, would commiserate mine, and frequently, of their own accord, bring water to quench my thirst, and at night collect branches and leaves to prepare me a bed in the wilderness." p. 356.

Natural Disposition of the Africans, and Capacity for Civilization.

FROM ASTLEY'S VOYAGES.

James Welsh's Voyages to Benin.—"The people are very gentle and loving."—Vol. I. p. 202.

"The inhabitants of Whidah are more polite and civilized than most people in the world, not excepting the European."—Vol. III. p. 14.

Marchais.—"There are no people on earth," says that author, "more tender of their offspring, or that shew more parental affection."—Vol. III. p. 20.

Nyendaël.—"Kingdom of Benin. The inhabitants are generally good-natured and civil, and may be brought to any thing by fair and soft means."

Artis says, that "the people of Benin are a sincere inoffensive people."

"The Negroes at Whidah are so industrious that no spot of land, except what is naturally barren, escapes planting, though even within the inclosures of their villages and houses."—Vol. III. p. 8.

Captain Stebbs, about 1724.—"The Foleys are a cleanly, decent, industrious people, very affable."—Vol. III. p. 199.

Dr. Trotter, of the Royal Navy, says—"Of the family sold for witchcraft, consisting, he thinks, of the man, his mother, wife, and two daughters, the woman shewed the deepest affliction, the man a sullen melancholy; said, that having quarrelled with the Cabbosheer of Salt-pan, he, in revenge, had accused him of witchcraft; he refused food. His hands were secured, but persisting to refuse all sustenance, he died of hunger in eight or ten days.

"Besides the instance already given of a slave starving himself to death, remembers another;—a woman was repeatedly flogged, and victuals forced into her mouth; no means, however, could make her swallow, and she lived the last four days in a state of torpid insensibility."

State of the Slaves in the Middle Passage.

"Slaves in the Passage are so crowded below, that it is impossible to walk through them, without treading on them; those who are out of irons are locked spoonways (in the technical phrase) to one another.

"It is the first mate's duty to see them stowed in this way every morning: those who do not get quickly into their places, are compelled by the cat. In this situation, when the ship had much motion, they were often miserably bruised. In the Passage, when the skuttles must be shut, the gratings are not sufficient for airing the rooms; he never himself could breathe freely unless immediately under the hatchway. Never saw ventilators used in these ships; a wind-sail was often tried on the Coast, but he remembers none used in the Passage. Has seen the Slaves drawing their breath with all those laborious and anxious efforts for life which is observed in expiring animals, subjected by experiment to foul air, or in the exhausted receiver of an air-pump.

"Believes the practice of dancing them is general in the trade; in the Brookes it was not used till exercise became absolutely necessary for their health, those in irons were ordered to stand up and make what motions they could, leaving a passage for such as were out of irons to dance round the deck. Such as did not relish the exercise of dancing were compelled to it by the cat; but many still refused, though urged in this way to a severe degree."

Nature and Consequences of the Slave Trade.

Captain Wilson, of the Royal Navy, was between five and six months in Africa in 1783 and 1784, as commander of the ship *Racehorse*, and resided chiefly at Goree, where he learnt how Slaves were generally procured for the trade, as matter of public notoriety, from frequent conversations with many respectable inhabitants, themselves traders in Slaves (p. 13), who spoke the French, English, and Negro languages; and who were frequently at his table.

"Slaves are principally procured for the Slave Trade by intestine wars; kings breaking up villages; crimes, or imputed crimes; and kidnapping.

"Villages are broken up by the king's troops surrounding them in the night, and seizing such of the inhabitants as suit their purpose. This practice most common when there is no war with another state.

"It is universally acknowledged, and he firmly believes, that free persons are sold for real or imputed crimes, for the benefit of their judges."

Mr. Wadstrom is "a native of Sweden and the chief Director of the Assay Office there. Was in Africa near three months in 1787, 1788 (p. 37), with Dr. Spaarman, engaged by the King of Sweden to make discoveries. The department allotted to witness was mineralogy, antiquities, and what regards the state of man.

"He thinks he knows perfectly how Slaves are obtained between

Senegal and Gambia, namely, by the general pillage, robbery by individuals, stratagem, or deceit.

"The general pillage is executed by the king's troops armed, and on horseback, who seize the unwary. Parties were sent out for this purpose by King Barbessin, almost every day during the week.

"He was at Joal accompanying one of the Embassies, which the French Governor used to send every year, with presents to the black Kings to keep up the commerce. It is customary for the king to make a return for these presents, by a gift of Slaves; and though unwilling to pillage, he was excited to it by means of a constant intoxication. When sober, he always expressed a reluctance to harass his people; complained that the inhabitants of Goree, continually coming under pretence of Trade, took occasion to make him insignificant presents; that they then came upon him with long accounts, debts said to be due, and pretensions without end: that the Governor of Goree living among them thought little of the sufferings of the Negroes; and that he must have been imposed upon to suffer his name to be used on such occasions. This speech was interpreted on the spot, and put in a journal by witness, who also heard the King hold the same language on different days, and yet he afterwards ordered the pillage to be executed. Witness has no doubt but that he also pillages in other parts of his dominions.

"King of Sallum practises the pillage. Witness saw twenty-seven Slaves from Sallum, twenty-three of whom were women and children thus taken. Was told by captains and merchants that this was the usual practice.

"Was told by merchants at Goree that the King of Damel practises the pillage.

"Robbery, in which individuals seize on each other, was a general way of taking single slaves."

Mr. Rooke "always understood, that when he wanted Slaves for sale, he made war to procure them. He knew that kidnapping took place in the neighbourhood of Goree. It was spoken of as a common practice.

"He often asked Accra what he meant by prisoners of war. Found they were such as had been carried off by a set of marauders, who ravage the country for that purpose."

Captain T. B. Thomson, R. N. heard "that the word 'Panyer,' which is common on the coast, means kidnapping or seizing of men."